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ABSTRACT

Recent and future activities of the Center for Education Statistics (CES) of the Department of Education are discussed. The purpose of the CES is to provide information about the status and progress of education to the American public. Center activities and features discussed include specific data-gathering efforts, growth in technical capabilities, dramatic changes in funding, responsibilities and authority, and outside sources of advisement, and information dissemination. The merger of the National Assessment for Educational Progress and the Schools Staffing Survey is discussed, and problems are identified in the context of a broader discussion of the link between statistics and research. (TJH)

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NEW DIRECTIONS AND INITIATIVES AT CES; IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE

Emerson J. Elliott
Director, Center for Education Statistics

If you have not looked recently, your information about the Department of Education's Center for Education Statistics may be both out of date and wrong. There is a real renaissance at the Center and I am delighted that AERA has invited me here to share some of our good news with you.

Thirty years ago, the Office of Education collected data from State Departments of Education and wrote pamphlets on rural schools. Twenty-three years ago this month the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was passed and the Office was forever changed. It is not unwarranted to draw a parallel between the Office of Education in the 1960s and the Center in the 1980s. Following an evaluation by the National Academy of Sciences in 1986, appropriation action in 1987, and legislation in 1988 the Center stands at the door of a new world--one it is almost, but perhaps not quite, ready to enter.

As some of you will know, I have my share of personal memories of the late National Institute of Education. The Institute's lack of an effective constituency--attributed to both internal and external circumstances--has been painfully documented. I need not belabor the point here that NIE's program plans and its funding were repeatedly rebuffed. The Center's situation is sharply contrasting not only in its results but also in its creation. Over the past 18 months literally dozens of people have rallied to support the activities of the Center. One of our most effective advocates repeatedly advises me that the Center needs "lots of mothers and fathers" to work on its behalf. We have found them--or they have found us--and some are here in this room. It could take a whole speech just to recognize the support in places where it counted by folks who had never paid much attention to education statistics before--statisticians, Governors, members of Congress and Congressional staff, as well as educators. Nor would any of this even have begun without the insistent prodding and constant support of Assistant Secretary Finn and Secretary Bennett. Now the Center has enhanced visibility and, of course, these "mothers and fathers" have high expectations as to what their child must do now. So, in the same way the Office of Education was propelled into a new world in 1965, the Center enters one in 1988.

A. NEW DIRECTIONS AND INITIATIVES

The first half of my remarks today describe several of the Center's new directions and initiatives. These deal with the content of our data program, technical capability, budget, statutory authority and the basis of decision-making.

1. OUR DATA TELL MORE ABOUT THE STATUS AND TRENDS OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

The Center's legal foundation--extending back to 1867--is clear: its purpose must be to provide information about the status and progress of education as general information for the American public.

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Perhaps the single most important CES initiative for data users is our move to fill long-standing gaps in the nation's education statistics and also to make data more useful for analytical purposes.

- At the elementary and secondary level, the Center has initiated a sample Survey of Schools and Staffing (SASS) that will greatly expand information about teacher job experience, work incentives, activities, use of time, compensation, and attitudes. It is gathering data on school incentive programs and college enrollment rates. And principals are surveyed also on such matters as job preparation and experience, attitudes and roles. In our school universe surveys, items on racial composition of schools and proxies for socio-economic status are being added. We are also beginning a major revamping of financial information that will restore detailed data on the purposes for which funds are spent. And at the request of Congress, the Center is designing an annual collection of data to describe the extent and status of dropouts.

- The Center's third longitudinal study is in the field this spring gathering baseline statistics on eighth graders--the first time we have begun at that level. With its biennial follow-ups, this will provide invaluable information about schooling and subsequent transitions as it tracks students through their high school years and after that.

- The National Assessment of Educational Progress will be strengthened in several ways I will mention later.

- We have taken steps to strengthen the analytic potential of our data. More data will be available at the teacher and school level instead of aggregated. Data sets are being linked with common questions and "nested" samples. Data will be representative of States and other elements of diversity in American education including schools in different settings--urban, rural, rich, poor, large, small, high and low minority enrollment, public and private.

- At the postsecondary level, we expanded our vision to include all postsecondary institutions in basic data collections (now called the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System--IPEDS), but we have added important new data to help achieve comparability and explain differences in reporting. For example, we are now collecting data on "total institutional credit" activity, a measure we expect to be more comparable across institutions than the ill-defined "FTE enrollment."

- The postsecondary collections are also more comprehensive. IPEDS is asking for additional information on retirement and fringe benefits, system-wide costs and State office expenditures so that financial statistics will be more complete. And we have instituted a separate data collection on student financial aid that will open up enormous new research opportunities. It provides a wealth of first time data on aided and unaided students at every college level, has gathered representative data describing the U.S. college population and it is

structured so that student and institutional data bases can be linked. We plan to use this study as the foundation for new longitudinal surveys of postsecondary students, and of postgraduate experience.

- And this spring, we will be conducting our first survey of college faculty with data on characteristics, experience, attitudes, work week and other not-previously available information.

2. THE CENTER'S TECHNICAL CAPABILITY IS GROWING

Well, are all these new data any good? The Center has an advisory body called the Advisory Council on Education Statistics (ACES) with responsibility to oversee our work and to set standards that will assure our data are technically sound and not subject to political influence. Three years ago, ACES asked the Department to contract with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to evaluate the Center as a way to help the Council members do their work. In a widely quoted 1986 report, the Academy sent an alarm:

> "Without strong and continuous commitment ... we are unanimous in our conviction that serious consideration should be given to the more drastic alternatives of abolishing the Center."

and the evaluation summed up its judgment:

> ". . . The Center . . . requires a fundamental change in its methods of operation . . . ."

About a quarter of the Academy's recommendations dealt with technical standards; validity, pilot or exploratory studies; and evaluations of methodology. Several comments and recommendations related to the "decline" of the Center staff.

The Department of Education accepted the challenge and has made significant changes in the Center's technical operations. We have built on excellent work in some places--such as the longitudinal studies program, a redeveloped postsecondary education data system, the Condition of Education report and an incipient school sample study--and taken bold initiatives to deal with deficiencies identified by the Academy. For example, we have:

- hired a chief statistician to take charge of technical policy and ensure that our recently developed statistical standards are met
- initiated an in-house technical training program
- encouraged staff to prepare articles for journals and professional conferences and increased our participation in the Washington Statistical Society, American Statistical Association and, of course, AERA.
- increased our staff by 30% during 1987.
- established publication review and clearance procedures that have peer review as a major feature

These highlights should indicate the wide scope of our actions. The impact on users should be greater confidence in quality when they buy Center tapes or read our publications. My goal is that users will come to speak about Center products like chicken king Frank Perdue who says: "If it has my name on it, it has to be good."

3. OUR FUNDING SITUATION HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY

Increasing the comprehensiveness and quality of education statistics takes money. However, for six years, beginning in 1981, the budget for the Center and National Assessment persisted at about $12.5 million, subject to severe effects of inflation.

Cuts were made in the number of statistical surveys, coverage of items and precision of estimates so, as a result, the nation had less data at the time a sweeping education reform movement called for "accountability." When A Nation at Risk was written, the authors had to make do with old, incomplete and second best data or anecdotal information. And when the Governors reported their Results in Education: 1987 they found it necessary to leave blank columns for student achievement and dropouts, two of the measures they viewed as essential to describe education progress State-by-State.

Such "data gaps" and the new urgency for education statistics had a sharp fiscal impact on the Center. Through support of the Assistant Secretary, the shackles of level funding were at last removed in 1987 when $14.1 million was provided for Center programs. The Administration and Congress joined in the unprecedented rise to $21 million for this current fiscal year. The President's budget would further increase this to $29.5 million for next year.

At our OERI rehearsal for a hearing on appropriations, we listed the witnesses who would include the Assistant Secretary, the Deputy Assistant Secretary and the Director of the Center. Recalling the song from "Fiddler on the Roof," the Assistant Secretary explained why those were the representatives to appear before the committee--"Tradition." But my OERI colleague Milton Goldberg--never one to be bested by an Assistant Secretary--reminded us of a second song in Fiddler, "If I Were a Rich Man."

The Center is generously funded today compared with recent history. But we are not rich. Taking inflation into account, the President's 1989 budget request would reach just above the 1974 level of funding for the Center, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In the main, our 1988 appropriation permits us to initiate major surveys on schools and teachers and on college faculty, begin funding the longitudinal follow-up and expand NAEP. Yes, we have a bigger account at Treasury; we also have much larger bills to pay.

4. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE GROWING BUT SO IS OUR AUTHORITY

The Center directions and initiatives I've described thus far are things already well underway, but now I want to talk about something that falls in the "hard news" category--both because it is happening, although it is not concluded, and because we are too close to the event for much perspective. I'm

talking, of course, about provisions of the pending elementary and secondary amendments that would alter the basic laws authorizing the Center and that govern the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The House-Senate Conferees concluded their work March 31 and the final bill is scheduled for a vote in each chamber next week, with Presidential action to follow.

Over a year ago, Congressman Peter Visclosky of Indiana introduced an amendment to the School Improvement Act of 1987, H.R.5, that sought far ranging changes in the Center's authority.

The measures were portrayed as a direct response to the evaluation report of the National Academy of Sciences and they borrowed generously from laws and practices of other Government statistical agencies such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Bureau of the Census.

What exactly does this new authority encompass?

- Several of the changes wouldn't receive much attention outside Washington--restoring "National" to the Center's title, issuing a regular schedule of publications, providing separate authorizations for periodic studies (such as college student financial aid and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), and permitting the Center to appoint personnel and consultants.

- One of its primary features is to provide funding for a cooperative Federal-State education statistics program focusing on uniform data. This was proposed by the Administration and is intended to draw on the successful experience of other Government statistical agencies that operate such systems.

But the most far-reaching changes are ones that--in ways seasoned Washington observers will appreciate--refashion basic elements of bureaucratic turf. Many of these elements are ones that had been rearranged by the Administration in the 1985 reorganization of OERI and adopted by Congress in the 1986 Higher Education Amendments. Finding the Center's progress, as well as its relationships with other components of OERI, seemingly satisfactory, the Administration has not favored these provisions. Instead it prodded the Congress for a non-incremental increase in funding without which consequential improvements would be impossible regardless of legal provisions. The Congress appears to prefer <u>both</u> funds and legislation.

- The pending law includes a Presidentially-appointed Commissioner, separate contracting authority, authority to "sole source" certain procurements, separate publication authority, and an earmarked appropriation for staff and office expenses.

- Then there are new mandates for special reports on education indicators and on dropouts, census mapping, postsecondary longitudinal studies, and finally, there is a very tough provision to guard the confidentiality of responses from individuals.

These measures seemed so unlikely a year ago, yet they emerged from Conference in the last few weeks not with the usually expected compromises but with extra strengthening features that had not been in the House bill.

Nor is this all. The National Assessment of Educational Progress would also receive a new and sharply altered mandate in this pending legislation. This continuing study is the only representative national report on what American students know and can do. Dubbed "The Nation's Report Card" by former Governor Alexander of Tennessee, the Governor and Tom James teamed up to produce, with their blue ribbon panel of policymakers, educators and researchers, a report calling for State-by-State student achievement data and a new and independent governing structure.

These recommendations reflected a sea change in this country on State accountability. When national assessment began almost 20 years ago, it was designed to prevent State comparisons. Today the Governors, the Chiefs and many education organizations have concurred with the conclusions of the Alexander-James panel.

I couldn't say the proposals are without their detractors, of course. There has been controversy, for example, about "fair State-by-State comparisons", a "national curriculum", about how such tests would improve instruction, about competition with commercial test publishers. The Congressional conference has approved a bill that would make most of the modifications Alexander-James proposed, including a revised governance structure that requires broad consensus processes as a way to reach the crucial decisions on what to test and how to report results. However, that measure authorizes a pilot study of State-by-State comparisons for 1990 and 1992, and an independent evaluation would be required before Congress considered implementation of State comparisons.

5. WE ARE SEEKING AND USING ADVICE

My fifth characteristic of Center directions and initiatives is that we are more determined than ever both to seek advice from diverse sources and to weigh that advice in reaching decisions about our program and products. We are calling on a wide array of data producers and users, including members of the education research community, the media and policymakers. For example, we commissioned papers for advice on updating elementary-secondary data programs that shaped the content as well as the structure of our elementary and secondary collections. We convened a conference on our 1988 longitudinal study that resulted in starting with an eighth instead of a tenth grade cohort. I have already mentioned the Alexander-James report on National Assessment. That panel commissioned 46 papers to provide advice on its work. We have assembled researchers and other advisors and data users on our studies of student financial aid, college faculty, elementary secondary schools and staffing, and school finance.

We supported a panel to assess how well the structure of our studies responds to needs for policy relevant information, and hosted a pair of meetings on the pros and cons of a possible merger of National Assessment and our school sample studies by the UCLA testing center, CRESST. Still other panels have advised us

on dropout data, education indicators and the needed revisions of our "IPEDS" higher education surveys.

Last year, for the first time, we were able to attract three fellows of the American Statistical Association. Ingram Olkin, and his associates Ed Haertel and Larry Hedges, are assembling groups to help conceptualize an education data system for the 21st Century. Funding for this was provided by the National Science Foundation. Working very closely with Center staff, both these fellows and our staff have reported to me with some enthusiasm that already they feel benefits from their daily contacts.

The Center appointed a NAEP Technical Review Panel involving many education researchers. This Panel, Chaired by Ed Haertel, is addressing three major issues: 1) the soundness of NAEP trend data, 2) the puzzling problem of the 1986 reading anomaly, and 3) technical considerations related to a State-by-State assessment program. The panel is both providing us with advice for the development of the 1990 work scope as well as helping the Government respond to public concerns voiced about these issues.

Altogether, over the past year, the Center has met with ten standing advisory panels involving 105 members and has convened eighteen one-time meetings to request advice from 379 individuals, a large share of them researchers. These nearly 500 advisors exclude external peer reviewers for publications as well as groups organized by others with whom we meet regularly (such as SHEEO's).

The advice we obtain from these sources is the essential yeast of the Center's loaf of bread. We need to have a data program that is technically adequate but at the same time sensitive to content. In fact, we have given this necessary connection of data user needs, research and statistics a permanent and senior ranking focal point in the Center by creating the position of Chief Advisor for Research, a post parallel to the Center's Chief Statistician. The new legislation I described a few moments ago would give this pair of senior positions extra stature by creating them in law as Associate Commissioners.

B. IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND POLICY

These five descriptions of Center directions and initiatives should be enough to give you a fair sense as to what the Center for Education Statistics is all about in April, 1988.

Let's turn to some implications of the Center's new directions and initiatives.

1. STATISTICS NEEDS RESEARCH--AND VICE VERSA

I have always enjoyed the paragraph in John Gardner's Excellence that calls for skill, even nobility, in the endeavors of individuals in a society. He wrote:

> "An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted

> activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water."

My first observation is that it is possible to have excellent statistics in education only with the assistance of research. Scoping down Mr. Gardner's call for excellence from the nation to the Center makes the parallel clear enough. It won't do to have a Federal education statistics office that fails to achieve excellence in standards of technical proficiency in its plans, study designs, pilot tests, conduct of surveys and reporting. But it won't do, either, to achieve such excellence in statistics if we ignore the content of those statistics. In both areas our work must "hold water," to use Mr. Gardner's metaphor. Research is the principal intellectual representative of content, since research studies education, measures education, and looks for relationships in education.

But research develops every year, and one result is that some things important to statisticians--such as constancy in survey methods and maintenance of long time data series--cannot be permitted to rule every decision. Another is that metrics proposed for data collection are themselves frequently controversial in their meaning, significance, and relevance. Resolution of such controversies is a necessary part of our survey planning, and a resolution that was satisfatory in 1981 often will not be adequate in 1988.

A second observation is that <u>using</u> researchers' advice is frequently much tougher than <u>seeking</u> it. You have a tendency to raise the most troubling questions, ones that cry out for clear answers but often yield different options, or more questions, or damaging assessments on <u>all</u> the possible courses of action. Let me cite two fresh examples of this sort.

We have recently considered possibly merging two large and important data sets--the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Schools and Staffing Survey--so as to permit relational analysis of teacher and school inputs with student backgrund and achievement data.

In meetings convened to advise us on this matter, researchers raised profound issues:

- the objectives of one study or the other would be damaged by the compromise that a combined design would require
- the data burden for a school would be so severe that participation rates would decline precipitously
- the management problems could not be solved by the intended 1990 implementation date
- and while a NAEP-SASS merger would link data on characteristics of current teachers with their students, it would not shed light on long-term inputs in relation to achievement.

This advice has stimulated considerable debate around the Center and with our Advisory Council on Education Statistics.

My other example of a dilemma research poses in developing a statistics program concerns dropout and retention rates. We first planned a national household survey to be conducted by telephone and constructed so as to supplement the October monthly "Current Population Survey" from the Bureau of the Census. But several researchers suggested that we were not giving sufficient consideration to the potentially serious undercoverage of our target population that would result from a telephone survey. Others questioned the validity of responses from the target population. Although we had realized these matters must be addressed in any developmental test, the severity of researcher concerns made us reconsider the importance of the feasibility study that will precede this particular survey. We now want to look not primarily what the feasibility study can tell us about administrative issues, but rather at what it has to say about developing reliable estimates of dropouts through a household design.

These are just two examples of assistance we have received from individual researchers and organizations. You can see the problem we often face: we can (1) move quickly on the basis of hunches and past experience so data will be timely but perhaps not precisely measure what a policy question requires, or (2) wait for a more valid measure, perhaps acquired through case studies, but with unknown potential for nationwide statistical collections and certainly not produced on a timely basis. Of course, neither choice is satisfactory and there is no one-solution-fits-all-cases to this dilemma. CES has benefitted tremendously from the posing of challenging questions that had not always occurred to us or had not been perceived with sufficient urgency. One response is to expand statistical research, pilot testing and development prior to full-scale data collection and we are doing just that.

This brings me to a third observation--that a link between statistics and research will be most productive if both the Center and the research community make wide use of our data.

There are several reasons why I would like to see more analysis of our data. One relates to our extensive efforts over the last few years to ensure that our data bases address issues of current and emerging policy interest. To the extent that there are more policy analyses conducted that use our data bases, that is a sign we have been on target in determining the design and content of our programs.

Another reason is related to the first; it is that analysis begets analysis. People become aware of the flexibility and utility of data systems through seeing them used by respected analysts in a variety of settings. We have high hopes that the use of our data will take off in this way, with considerable growth as a result of word-of-mouth advertising.

A third reason is that only through analysis of the data do we come to know the strengths and weaknesses of our statistics. When researchers use our data, they are able to tell us about the adequacy of the content, about problems they encounter in the structure or design of the survey, and about specific processing problems we may not be aware of. I feel that internal data analysis is one particularly important research use. Staff of the Center should work with the data, and be familiar with the types of problems other analysts are confronting so that we will be more sensitive to such problems when we design

our studies. I believe the long-term payoff to CES of some modest expansion in its in-house analysis program can be very substantial.

2. WHERE NEXT?

The legislation I described a few moments ago may insulate the Center from political winds, as its sponsors sought to do, and it will surely alter bureaucratic balances among OERI programs and authorities, as Assistant Secretary Finn has asserted in another session at this conference. But if either of these is true, then the Center must redouble its aggressiveness to assure that insulation does not become isolation from reality. Other offices in the Department of Education and in the Government are among the primary users of our data and have much to contribute to our agenda. Milton Goldberg's Programs for the Improvement of Practice is a sensitive listening post for trends and currents in American education that can tell both researchers and statisticians a great deal about the needs of practicing educators for information. And Sally Kilgore's Office of Research is the Department's primary point of contact with the education research community. The Center must keep in touch with its surroundings.

I want, therefore, to draw together several comments on how research and statistics can move forward from here.

Researchers can certainly lend us a hand by producing better metrics. The eternal questions of relationships among inputs, processes and outcomes of schooling will not be sidestepped by wishing that policymakers would stop asking them. How to measure the quality of a teacher or of successful teaching; how to report comparisons of student progress fairly across States; how to measure effective schooling and how to assess equity in distribution of resources are examples of questions that won't go away.

You must continue, and I hope expand, your willingness to lend us your expertise. In this regard, I want to note for the record that Leigh Burstein and Eva Baker of the UCLA Center not only organized the pair of meetings I described earlier but paid the costs and made it a part of their regular CRESST Center activities under their Office of Research grant. That endeavor served both CRESST's purposes and the Center for Education Statistics. This is a pitch for others to follow their lead. The 379 individuals attending ad hoc meetings and 105 members of our continuing advisory panels served without compensation, except in a few cases where commissioned papers were part of the arrangement. These are efforts that serve your professional responsibilities and make important contributions to the nation.

Let's find new ways to create fellowships, internships, postdoctoral awards and other opportunities for data analysis. Government predilections for keeping a trim workforce limit our capability to hire new analysts, although we are doing some of that as positions become available. But when you apply for the OERI fellowships, why don't you propose to conduct your project at the Center? Congress is adding a program for State and local staff to come to the Center for training purposes. Here and now I challenge AERA's leadership to develop a traineeship or fellows program complementary to the one the National Science Foundation funds in education statistics with the American Statistical Association.

I encourage researchers to tap the Center's data bases as a national resource. You could suggest supplements or arrangements to piggyback Center surveys and longitudinal studies. Your case studies or sub-studies would gain substantially in explanatory power through the contextual perspective that links with the Center's national data bases could provide. These types of linkages would form a symbiotic relationship that would enhance the content of CES programs as well as the generalizability and policy relevance of research. It would be especially productive if there were collaborative efforts between education reseachers and Center statistical research and analysis staff. We'd learn more about data analysis techniques through the guidance of people who are first coming to the data rather than overly familiar with it as we might be. Why shouldn't AERA members start an "adopt-a-CES-researcher" program?

There remains a challenge of dissemination--how do you hear about the Center from one annual conference to the next? OERI, IS and predecessors of both have dealt with this question for at least two decades. Sherry Horn has appeared in a panel on the subject at this conference. What is in the AERA journal, and what other sources of information could bring to your consciousness the availability and qualities of Center data. AREA members could certainly give all of us in OERI a hand in answering these questions. In Wisconsin, Michigan and the District of Columbia we have initiated some contacts with doctoral programs to encourage students to use our data for dissertation research. We are also considering ways to arrange contracts for analysis and joint statistical agreements--commonly used in the Bureau of the Census--with Center funding.

3. WILL IT LAST?

People often ask whether I expect the Center's new fortunes to last:

- will Congress continue to provide the funds needed for these expensive collections?
- will a new administration give the essential impetus to actions that will permit the Center to grow stronger as Assistant Secretary Finn and Secretary Bennett have done?
- will our broader constituency group, comprising governors, legislators, statisticians, and yes, some education researchers, continue their effective support both by bringing their message to Congress and to other places where it matters and also by using the data we produce?
- will the members of Congress and their staffs who have pressed legislative and appropriation agendas with impressive power and understanding sustain their interest through the seemingly endless months before promised new data actually arrive?

My own response is yes, the Center's future will continue to provide an opportunity for it to prosper. I shall conclude with my reasons for that optimistic assessment:

- Sponsors want data--It will prosper because people who have rallied to secure legislation and appropriations genuinely need better information.

- Americans in general need and use data--The Center will prosper because every issue of USA Today demonstrates that Americans have a higher understanding of the use of statistics as a means of becoming informed and education is clearly a major national enterprise about which to be informed.

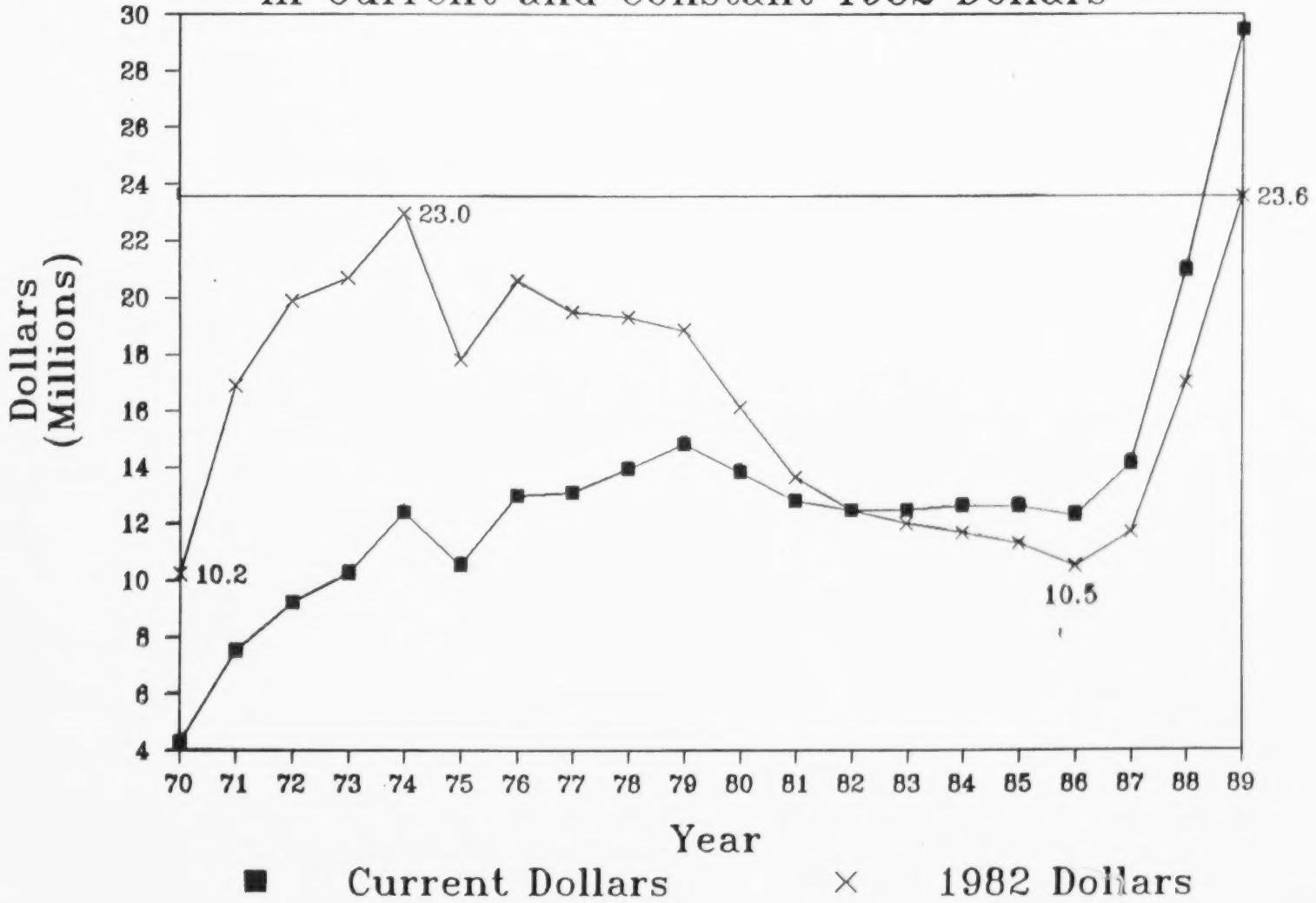
- CES is doing what it promised--The Center will prosper because it is making good on what it assured the Congress and the public it would do--produce more complete, higher quality and technically defensible statistics.

- And finally, policymakers need data--The Center will prosper because education accountability shows no sign of waning in State capitols and data are needed to assess change.

The National Academy of Sciences evaluation panel stated the argument in a cogent way:

> "The . . . . educational reform movement . . . . provides a dramatic illustration of the power of data to fuel a policy debate and of the changing demands for data that come with the recognition of a crisis . . . . The demand for data . . . . has thrust the Center forward and promises to keep it there for a long time."

CES Plus NAEP Appropriations
in Current and Constant 1982 Dollars



ATTACHMENT A